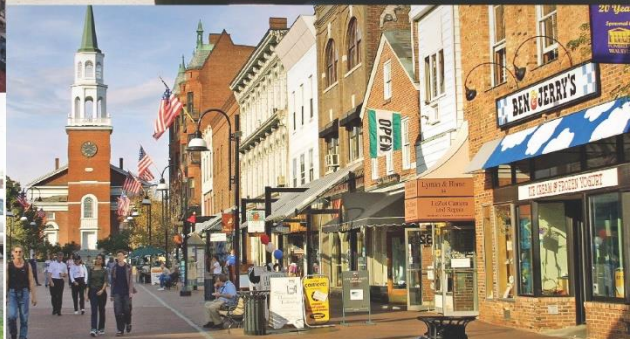
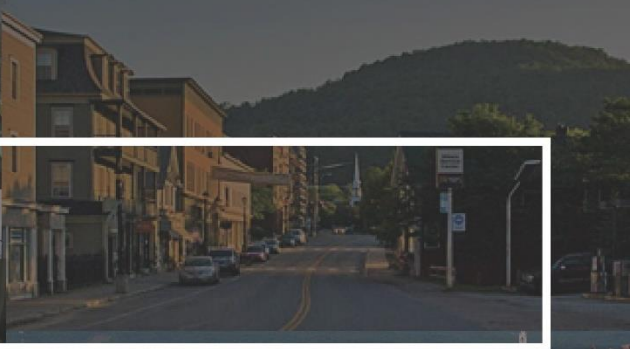


Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan

2018

Public Involvement Plan

September 7, 2018



Submitted by:

In association with:



Monahan Mobility Consulting, LLC

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Purpose

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) outlines two phases of Public Transit Policy Plan public involvement activities that will primarily take place in Fall 2018 and Spring/Summer 2019, with some activities spanning the entire project. The purpose of the PIP is to ensure achievement of the following public involvement goals:

1. **Education:** Educate the public and stakeholders regarding:
 - a. The role and purpose of the PTPP
 - b. How the PTPP affects their organizations and lives
 - c. How public feedback can influence the PTPP
2. **Engagement:** Engage with stakeholders and the public to gather meaningful feedback that will be incorporated into the planning process.
3. **Consistency:** Follow outreach guidelines for projects, plans, and other agency activities established in “Engaging the Public,” the 2017 VTrans Public Involvement Guide, as well as the Vermont Agency of Transportation FTA Title VI Program (2017).

1.2. Data Collection Tools

The project team will use a mix of online and in-person engagement tools to collect accurate and relevant data about stakeholder and public opinions, including:

- **MetroQuest Survey Activity:** A statewide interactive online survey will be developed on the MetroQuest platform – one survey will be developed for each outreach phase of the project.
- **Regional Forums:** Eleven regional forums are planned across the state in Fall 2018.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Stakeholder interviews will span both public outreach phases of the project.
- **Comment Database:** A comment database for feedback collected at public forums and stakeholder meetings will be developed and maintained throughout the project.

1.3. Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Phase I (Fall 2018)

Phase I of public outreach (Fall 2018) will focus on gathering public and stakeholder feedback to inform the needs assessment phase of the PTPP. The primary outreach activities for Phase I will be:

- **Project Website:** Launch project website, which will be updated throughout the life of the project with project information and outreach activities.
- **MetroQuest Survey Activity:** Launch statewide online interactive survey focusing on collecting public input that will be used to inform the needs assessment phase of the PTPP. Survey will be promoted via Front Porch Forum, social media, social service providers, bus placards, media release, and project website.
- **Regional Forums:** Hold eleven forums across the state.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Interviews with critical stakeholders will span both public outreach phases of the project.

Phase II (Spring/Summer 2019)

Phase II of public outreach (Spring/Summer 2019) will focus on gathering public and stakeholder feedback on draft PTPP recommendations. The primary outreach activities for Phase II will be:

- **Project Website:** Continue to update project website with project information and outreach activities.
- **MetroQuest Survey Activity:** Conduct statewide online interactive survey focusing on gathering public feedback on draft PTPP recommendations. Survey will be promoted via Front Porch Forum, social media, social service providers, bus placards, media release, and project website.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Interviews with critical stakeholders will span both public outreach phases of the project.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

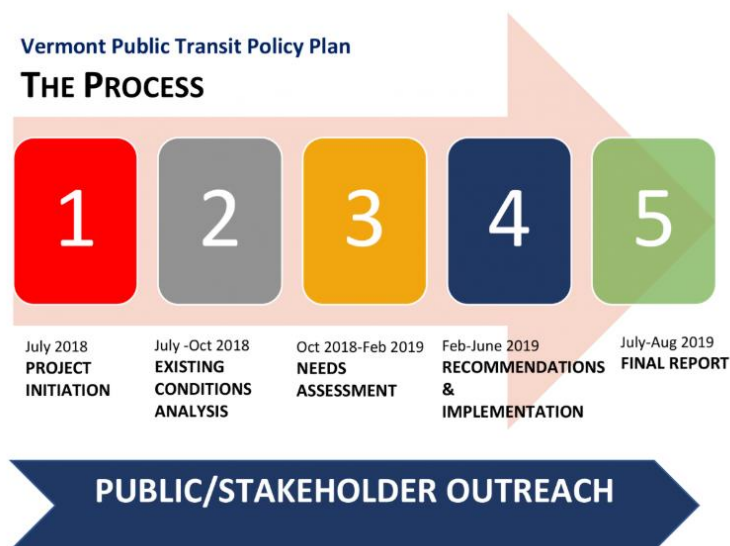
2.1. Project Overview

The Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) will quantify Vermont’s transit needs, as well as recommend programmatic and policy initiatives to strengthen the statewide transit system. This plan will lay out a 10-year vision for improved transit service in Vermont and develop policies and strategies to guide the improvement of Vermont’s transit network.

The development of a PTPP every five years is required by statute (Title 24, VSA, §5089). The first PTPP was published in 2000 and the most recent version was published in 2012. This Plan will be an update to the 2012 PTPP and will serve as a guide for the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and its partners in making decisions on implementing and funding transit projects that facilitate mobility for Vermonters, minimize duplication of services, leverage limited funds, maximize ridership, and improve coordination of services. In addition, the PTPP will incorporate an update of the 2014 Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan, including developing an annual workplan for the Elderly and Disabled (E&D) Transportation Program.

The Public Transit Policy Plan development is a 15-month process that began in June 2018 and encompasses five phases of work. Transit policy planning for a state is a complicated undertaking, and the planning process must be flexible. While each phase has a different purpose, there are times during which multiple phases may be underway at once.

Figure 1 | Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan Process



2.2. Purpose of Public Involvement

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) outlines two phases of public involvement activities that will primarily take place in Fall 2018 and Spring/Summer 2019, with some activities spanning the entire project. The purpose of the PIP is to ensure achievement of the following public involvement goals:

1. **Education:** Educate the public and stakeholders regarding:
 - a. The role and purpose of the PTPP
 - b. How the PTPP affects their organizations and lives
 - c. How public feedback can influence the PTPP
2. **Engagement:** Engage with stakeholders and the public to gather meaningful feedback that will be incorporated into the planning process.
3. **Consistency:** Follow outreach guidelines for projects, plans, and other agency activities established in “Engaging the Public,” the 2017 VTrans Public Involvement Guide, as well as the Vermont Agency of Transportation FTA Title VI Program (2017).

3. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Having accurate and relevant data about stakeholder and public opinions, perceptions, and concerns is a cornerstone component of conducting effective public and stakeholder engagement. To collect data to support the public engagement process, the project team will develop, administer, and analyze a statewide online survey, facilitate regional forums and collect feedback, meet with key stakeholders to gather information about opinions and concerns, and maintain a comment database for feedback collected at public workshops and stakeholder meetings.

Further information about survey deployment and other public and stakeholder engagement plans can be found in Section 4, Public and Stakeholder Engagement. This section describes the tools that will be used to collect relevant stakeholder and public opinion data.

3.1. Survey Tools

3.1.1. Online

MetroQuest is an online, interactive survey and public feedback platform that prioritizes fun, easy-to-use interfaces and activities. The project team will develop, administer, and analyze a MetroQuest survey activity for each of the two public outreach phases of the project; the data collected from this survey will be used to inform the Existing Conditions, as well as draft Recommendations.

3.1.2. Paper

For each public outreach phase, a paper version of the questions asked in the online MetroQuest survey activity will be available for distribution to social service providers and others who work with populations that may not use the internet. The data collected from this survey will be used to inform the Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment, as well as draft Recommendations. The paper surveys should be returned to the consultant team for use in each outreach phase. The paper version of the survey will match the survey question section of the MetroQuest activity but will not be able to replicate any interactive activities.

3.2. Regional Forums

During the first phase of outreach, a round of regional forums conducted as part of the PTPP will gather public input on existing public transportation services, service gaps and challenges, and potential solutions. The

comments received through the forums, together with responses to the MetroQuest online survey, will be used to:

- Inform the needs assessment phase of the PTPP
- Identify and discuss the transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes and priorities among potential solutions for inclusion in the Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) - fulfilling the requirement for public participation for the HSTCP component of the PTPP.
- Capture transit needs across the state.

3.3. Stakeholder Interviews

Steadman Hill Consulting will work with the VTrans project manager to develop a list of stakeholders who will be contacted in person during both phases of public and stakeholder outreach. The results of these meetings will be summarized and incorporated into the final report, though the confidentiality of the interviewees will be respected.

3.4. Comment Database

The project team will be responsible for collecting comments received from the public and stakeholders throughout the project. All hand-written comment forms, notes and non-digital activity feedback taken during events will be entered into a public involvement comment database. This comprehensive comment database will be easily sortable by topic, and thus provide planners with a complete qualitative data set that can be used in tandem with quantitative analysis. As needed, the project team can synthesize and analyze the comments to provide a summary of how the public responded to key ideas and recommendations.

4. PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

4.1. Phase 1 (Fall 2018)

4.1.1. Website

The consulting team will provide content to VTrans to establish and maintain a project website¹ to disseminate information about the study. As the project progresses, website content could include presentations and memoranda suitable for public distribution, upcoming regional forums and public input opportunities, as well as a link to the MetroQuest survey activity. VTrans will reach out to partners, including VPTA and transit properties, to request that they provide links to the PTPP project website.

4.1.2. Survey

4.1.2.1. MetroQuest

For Phase I, a MetroQuest interactive online survey activity will be used to collect public input that will be used to inform the needs assessment phase of the PTPP. The draft survey can be found at <https://36824903-draft.metroquest.com/>. Please note that this is not the final url that should be used for distribution – this is just a test link.

¹ The project website has been established and launched at <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/PTPP>

Distribution

After developing and testing the survey, VTrans should, with assistance from the consultant, utilize the following platforms and existing contacts and connections to distribute the MetroQuest survey across the state:

- Front Porch Forum
- Media Release
- Project Website
- Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
- Existing social service provider email lists
- Bus Placards: The consultant team, in coordination with VTrans, could develop a 8.5x11 in bus placard design that VTrans could distribute to transit providers.

4.1.2.2. Paper

For Phase I, a paper version of the questions asked in the online MetroQuest survey activity will be available for distribution to social service providers and others who work with populations that may not use the internet. The paper version of the survey will match the prioritization, demographic, and survey question section of the MetroQuest activity but will not be able to replicate any interactive activities. The paper surveys should be returned to the consultant team for use in developing the Existing Conditions.

4.1.3. Regional Forums

The purpose of the first round of regional forums conducted as part of the PTPP is to gather input on existing public transportation services, service gaps and challenges, and potential solutions from stakeholders and transit riders. The comments received through the forums, together with responses to the MetroQuest online survey, will be used to:

- Inform the needs assessment phase of the PTPP
- Identify and discuss the transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes and priorities among potential solutions for inclusion in the Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) - fulfilling the requirement for public participation for the HSTCP component of the PTPP.
- Capture transit needs across the state.

The proposed approach to the regional forums is summarized below.

4.1.3.1. Format and Methods

Forums will be conducted in a workshop format, beginning with a brief presentation about the PTPP/HSTCP planning process and a summary of information collected about existing public transportation services and the propensity for transit use in the region. VTrans staff will review the proposed presentation materials at least 10 days in advance of the meetings.

Led by a facilitator, participants will then be given the opportunity to discuss existing services, service gaps and challenges, and potential solutions to identified system challenges. Using either a cell phone voting exercise or a dot voting exercise, participants will express their priorities among potential solutions and policies that will affect public transit in their communities.

Forums will last approximately 90 minutes.

4.1.3.2. Audience

Participants in each forum will include invited stakeholders and members of the general public, including both users and potential users of public transit services. Stakeholders, to be selected in close consultation with AOT staff, will include representatives of organizations such as: regional planning commissions; transit providers; public and nonprofit organizations that provide programs or services (including advocacy services) for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes; employers and business community organizations; health care providers; environmental organizations; active transportation planners and advocates; elected officials; and others. The forums will be advertised to the general public through email distribution lists of the stakeholder organizations, listservs such as Front Porch Forum, and notifications to local newspapers. However, the team does not expect large numbers of people from the general public to attend such meetings. To the extent they do, their positions and comments will be held in proper perspective to other stakeholders representing potentially large client bases.

4.1.3.3. Content

During the facilitated discussion, participants will be asked to comment on the following:

Existing Services

Are there additional services of which we should be aware? What are the strengths of the current system? What works well? Are taxis available and a viable option? Are ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft available? Does any service information need to be corrected?

Service Gaps

Geographic gaps: Are there areas without public transit service? Is there a need to travel across regional boundaries to reach important destinations? What specific destinations are hard to reach?

Temporal gaps: Do services operate late enough for work or recreational trips? Are weekend services available? Are there other limitations in operating hours?

Trip type gaps: Are different rider groups able to travel for any type of trip they need to make? What types of trips are needed?

Accessibility needs: Can fixed route and demand response vehicles accommodate multiple wheelchairs? Are paths of travel to bus stops accessible? Is more accessible information needed? Do riders need assistance on vehicles? If so, we will follow up to get geographical information on such occurrences.

Technology challenges: Do information sources, trip reservations, or fare payment require a computer or smartphone: Is that a barrier? From the transit providers' perspective, are there ongoing issues with the RouteMatch scheduling software? Are there technical issues preventing better coordination with neighboring providers' systems?

Information gaps: Is information about transportation options available, easy to find, and easy to use?

Affordability gaps: Are fares reasonable? Does the cost of any service keep potential riders from using it?

Coordination gaps: Is traveling from one provider's service area to another's possible? Is it difficult? Is there a need to reach out-of-county or regional destinations? Is it possible to make regional trips?

Other service gaps or travel challenges: Are there other issues that we should discuss?

Potential Solutions

The facilitator will introduce some possible solutions to the gaps that participants identified during the discussion, and participants will be asked to suggest others. A discussion of the pros and cons of various alternatives will be discussed as well as their potential costs.

Potential solutions that seem feasible will be recorded on flip charts or in a Powerpoint presentation. If there is sufficient cellular or wifi access, polling via cellphone can be used to record participants' votes on priorities for the potential solutions, or how they would allocate a budget among the possible solutions. If the group is small enough and technology is not available, each participant will be given a number of sticky dots and asked to indicate with their dots which solutions are priorities for them. The facilitators will attempt to make this an enjoyable activity.

4.1.3.4. MetroQuest Survey

VTrans staff will bring either a tablet or a laptop computer to the regional forums, to encourage attendees to complete the MetroQuest survey. At least one VTrans staff person will attend each regional forum.

4.1.3.5. Schedule

Eleven forums are planned across the state to take place on six days (if possible), pairing regional planning commission regions (with the exception of the Northwest RPC region) that share a transportation provider, E&D service area, and/or geography. Forums in each pair of regions will be held on the same day. These meetings are proposed to be separate from any standing E&D or RPC TAC meetings. Forums are proposed to be conducted during October and November 2018 as follows:

- Northwest RPC on its own
- Central VT RPC + Chittenden County RPC
- Northeastern VT Development Assoc + Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Addison County RPC + Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission
- Southern Windsor County RPC + Windham Regional Commission
- Rutland RPC + Bennington County Regional Commission

4.1.4. Stakeholder Interviews

A statewide policy plan clearly affects many interested parties as it covers numerous autonomous transit operators, requires funding by state legislators, and has potential impacts on developments at the local level. For the Plan to be successful in the long term and bring about the kind of system envisioned in the state's goals for transit, there will need to be "buy-in" at all levels. This sort of cooperation is much more likely to happen if all affected parties feel that they were adequately heard during the development of the plan.

Interviews with critical stakeholders will span both public outreach phases of the project. Steadman Hill Consulting will work closely with VTrans to develop a list of conversation topics to be aware of potential conflicts and past history. However, the interviews are intended to be candid and open so that all issues are out on the table.

VTrans staff will develop a list of stakeholders for the consultant team to interview that may include the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; private sector stakeholders; healthcare providers; and opioid treatment centers. VTrans may also develop an email list of stakeholders who should receive the MetroQuest survey.

The project manager will conduct these meetings personally throughout the state and document the findings in memoranda.

4.2. Phase 2 (Spring/Summer 2019)

4.2.1. Website

The project team will continue to provide content to VTrans to maintain a project website² that disseminates information about the study. Website content could include presentations and memoranda suitable for public distribution, upcoming public meetings and public input opportunities, as well as a link to the MetroQuest survey activity. Website content during this phase will focus heavily on information and opportunities for feedback related to draft recommendations.

4.2.2. Survey

4.2.2.1. MetroQuest

Overview

For the second phase of public outreach (Spring/Summer 2019), the MetroQuest survey activity will focus on gathering public feedback on draft PTPP recommendations. Draft survey activity content will be developed in tandem with the draft recommendations.

Distribution

After developing and testing the survey, VTrans should, with assistance from the consultant, utilize the following platforms and existing contacts and connections to distribute the MetroQuest survey across the state:

- Front Porch Forum
- Media Release
- Project Website
- Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
- Existing social service provider email lists
- Bus Placards: The consultant team, in coordination with VTrans, could develop a 8.5x11 in bus placard design that VTrans could distribute to transit providers.

4.2.2.2. Paper

For Phase II, a paper version of the questions asked in the online MetroQuest survey activity will be available for distribution to social service providers and others who work with populations that may not use the internet. The paper surveys should be returned to the consultant team for use in developing the draft recommendations. The paper version of the survey will match the prioritization, demographic, and survey question sections of the MetroQuest activity, but will not be able to replicate interactive activities, such as mapping.

4.2.3. Stakeholder Outreach

The project manager will contact stakeholders interviewed during Phase I in person or via phone and provide a briefing on the Plan recommendations and gather comments and feedback. The results of these meetings will

² The project website has been established and launched at <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/PTPP>

be summarized and incorporated into the final report, though the confidentiality of the interviewees will be respected.

5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE

Table 1 | PTPP Public Involvement Schedule

	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
Project Website													
MetroQuest Survey (Phase 1)													
Regional Forums (Phase 1)													
Paper Survey (Phase 1)													
Stakeholder Interviews													
MetroQuest Survey (Phase 2)													
Paper Survey (Phase 2)													
Outreach Report													

6. REPORTING

The project team will be responsible for collecting comments received from the public and stakeholders throughout the project. All hand-written comment forms, notes and non-digital activity feedback taken during events will be entered into a public involvement comment database. This comprehensive comment database will be easily sortable by topic, and thus provides planners with a complete qualitative data set that can be used in tandem with quantitative analysis. As needed, the project team can synthesize and analyze the comments to provide a summary of how the public responded to key ideas and recommendations.

This database, in addition to quantifiable metrics (survey respondents, forum attendance, and Title VI populations addressed) will be used to develop an outreach report that will measure the success, span, and scope of outreach related to the project. The information will be used throughout the project to inform the development and refinement of the Plan.

7. APPENDIX

Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan FAQ – 2018 and 2019

Why is this plan necessary?

■ Funding

- Public transit in Vermont, like other states, is funded through a combination of *fares, donations, local community funding, contracted services, federal funding, and state funding.*
- Public transit in Chittenden County gets transit funding directly from the federal government, but the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) distributes federal funding to all other areas of the state.
- The State of Vermont also provides substantial financial subsidies to the local transit providers.

■ State Requirements

- The VTrans Public Transit section oversees how federal and state transit funds are used.
- The State of Vermont views public transportation as “an important matter of State concern, essential to the economic growth of the State and to the public health, safety, and welfare and present and future generations of Vermonters.”
- The State of Vermont requires VTrans to develop a Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) every five years.

■ Purpose of Plan

- The Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan outlines transit policies and goals, and develops strategies to meet current and future public transportation challenges.
- To develop these policies, goals, and strategies, VTrans must identify transit gaps and needs in the state.

Why does the plan matter?

■ It has a local impact.

- Statewide public transportation funding priorities can impact funding and resources available to your local transit services – which can impact frequency of service, days of service, and location of service.

■ It helps create new public transit services.

- **Intercity Service:** The most recent Public Transit Policy Plan (2012) recommended new intercity bus service in response to reduced Greyhound service. In 2013, Vermont Translines was founded, which provides service between Burlington, VT and Albany, NY, as well as between Rutland, VT, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH. A new route connects Manchester and Bennington to Albany.
- **Commuter Programs:** The most recent Public Transit Policy Plan (2012) recommended creating a new statewide trip planner on the GoVermont! Platform. In 2016, VTrans applied for and received a federal grant to develop an online statewide transit trip planner that includes non-traditional rural transit systems. The trip planner is now available online at www.connectingcommuters.org.

How can I influence this plan?

- **Interactive Online Activity:** Take a short, interactive online survey to tell us your public transportation priorities and preferences. <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/PTPP>
- **Website:** Keep an eye on the project website for regional forums in your area. <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/PTPP>

- **Tell Your Friends:** Tell your friends to take the survey and attend regional forums!
<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/PTPP>